

MS# 183195.01 (4967)
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Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of using an interactive voice response (IVR) system and a computer server connected to a communications network to support voice messaging between individuals accessible through telephone devices located on the network and individuals accessible through computer devices located on the network, the method comprising:

receiving a plurality of voice messages from remote users of devices located on the network, each received voice message including information identifying at least one intended recipient;

for each received voice message, accessing a user profile for its intended recipient, said user profile specifying one or more communication devices located on the network by which such intended recipient should receive delivery or notification of voice messages directed to such intended recipient, said communication devices including at least one of a telephone device and a computer device;

determining, for each of the intended recipients, a preferred one of the specified communication devices by which such intended recipient should receive delivery or notification of voice messages directed to such intended recipient as a function of a time period during which the voice messages are received and updating the respective user profile accordingly;

notifying the intended recipients of the received voice messages at the preferred communication devices according to their respective user profiles, said notifying including notifying the intended recipient of the received voice messages via the preferred device; and

delivering the received voice messages to their intended recipients in audio form, including delivering at least one of the received voice messages to its intended recipient in audio form using the IVR system and the preferred communication device specified in the user profile of the intended recipient.

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Claim 2 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein delivering includes audio streaming the received voice messages to their intended recipients using the IVR system and the computer server.

Claim 3 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein delivering includes delivering one of the received voice messages to its intended recipient through the communication device specified by such intended recipient in response to the notifying.

Claim 4 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein notifying includes sending electronic messages to a plurality of the intended recipients, the electronic messages including hyperlinks to corresponding ones of the stored voice messages, whereby the plurality of intended recipients can initiate the delivering of associated voice messages by selecting the hyperlinks.

Claim 5 (original): The method of claim 4 wherein said electronic messages include pop-up text messages.

Claim 6 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein receiving includes receiving prerecorded voice messages from the remote users.

Claim 7 (original): The method of claim 1 further comprising storing the received voice messages.

Claim 8 (original): The method of claim 1 further comprising restricting a length of each voice message to less than one minute.

Claim 9 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein at least one of the voice messages is received together with information for addressing the communication device associated with its intended recipient, the method further comprising delivering said one of the voice messages to its intended recipient using the information for addressing said communication device.

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Claim 10 (original): The method of claim 1 further comprising providing delivery confirmation to senders of the delivered voice messages.

Claim 11 (original): The method of claim 1 wherein the communications network comprises a telecommunications network to which the IVR system is connected and a widely distributed computer network to which the computer server is connected, said IVR system and said computer server being connected to each other, and wherein the telephone devices are located on the telecommunications network and the computer devices are located on the widely distributed computer network.

Claim 12 (original): The method of claim 11 further comprising receiving information via the computer server from a remote user of a computer device located on the widely distributed computer network, the received information indicating said remote user's desire to record a voice message using a telephone device located on the telecommunications network, and contacting such telephone device via the IVR system to capture such voice message.

Claim 13 (original): The method of claim 11 further comprising supporting an instant text messaging option by which individuals having a presence on the widely distributed computer network at the same time can send pop-up text messages to one another through the widely distributed computer network.

Claim 14 (canceled).

Claim 15 (original): The method of claim 13 wherein receiving voice messages via the IVR system includes receiving a telephone call via the IVR system from a user having a predefined group of contacts, determining whether said contacts currently have a presence on the widely distributed computer network, and advising the user via the IVR system regarding which of said contacts currently have a presence on the widely distributed computer network.

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Claim 16 (original): The method of claim 1 further comprising automatically generating a voice message upon an occurrence of a predefined event, and delivering the automatically generated voice message to one or more of the remote users.

Claim 17 (original): A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 1.

Claim 18 (currently amended): An apparatus for recording and sending audio messages to an interactive voice response (IVR) system coupled to a communications network for delivery to a recipient, the apparatus comprising:

a processor;[,]

a memory device;[,]

computer instructions stored in the memory device;[,]

a microphone;[,]

and
an interface to the communications network, [the] said computer instructions configuring the processor to record in an audio file, in response to input from a user, an audio message provided by the user to the microphone, and to transfer the audio file in which the audio message is recorded to the communications network via said interface, whereby the audio message recorded in the audio file may be transmitted through the communications network to the IVR system for delivery to the recipient via one or more remote devices specified in a profile of the recipient, and ~~the IVR system being~~ said computer instructions further configured configuring the processor to determine a preferred one of the one or more remote communication devices specified in the profile of the recipient at which to deliver the audio message as a function of a time period during which the audio message is provided by the user and to deliver the audio message to the intended recipient at the preferred communication device.

Claim 19 (original): The apparatus of claim 18 wherein the computer instructions configure the processor to compress the audio file prior to transferring the audio file to the communications network via said interface.

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Claim 20 (original): The apparatus of claim 18 wherein the computer instructions configure the processor to limit a length of the audio message provided by the user to less than one minute.

Claim 21 (original): The apparatus of claim 18 wherein the input from the user includes information identifying one or more individuals to whom the audio message should be sent, and wherein the computer instructions configure the processor to record said information in the audio file.

Claim 22 (original): The apparatus of claim 21 wherein the computer instructions configure the processor to record information identifying said user in the audio file.

Claim 23 (original): The apparatus of claim 18 wherein the apparatus is a telephony device, and wherein the communications network includes a telephony network.

Claim 24 (original): The apparatus of claim 23 wherein the telephony device is a mobile telephony device, and wherein the telephony network is a wireless telephony network.

Claim 25 (original): The apparatus of claim 18 wherein the apparatus is a computer device, and wherein the communications network includes a computer network.

Claim 26 (original): The apparatus of claim 25 wherein the computer network is the Internet.

Claim 27 (original): The apparatus of claim 25 wherein the computer device is a handheld computer device.

Claim 28 (currently amended) A method for recording and sending an audio message to an interactive voice response (IVR) system coupled to a communications network for delivery to

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a recipient using a computer device having a microphone and a network interface, the method comprising:

receiving the audio message from a user through the microphone;

recording the received audio message in an audio file;

determining a preferred one of the one or more remote communication devices specified in a user profile associated with the recipient as a function of a time period during which the audio message is transferred to the audio file, said user profile specifying communication devices by which such recipient should receive delivery or notification of audio messages directed to the recipient, and updating the respective user profile accordingly; and

sending the audio file to the network interface for delivery to the recipient at the preferred communication device via said IVR system through the communications network.

Claim 29 (original): The method of claim 28 wherein recording includes recording the audio message in the audio file as the audio message is received.

Claim 30 (original): The method of claim 28 wherein the audio message is a message spoken by the user.

Claim 31 (original): The method of claim 28 further comprising compressing the audio file prior to sending.

Claim 32 (original): The method of claim 28 further comprising receiving information from the user identifying one or more individuals to whom the audio message should be sent, and wherein recording includes recording said information in the audio file.

Claim 33 (original): The method of claim 32 further comprising providing the user with a list of individuals to whom the audio message may be sent, and wherein receiving information includes receiving one or more selections by the user from said list.

Claim 34 (original): The method of claim 33 further comprising supporting instant text messaging between said user and the individuals of said list.

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Claim 35 (original): A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 34.

Claim 36 (original): The method of claim 32 wherein receiving information includes receiving information for addressing one or more devices associated with said one or more individuals.

Claim 37 (original): A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 28.

Claim 38 – 46 (canceled).

Claim 47 (currently amended): A method comprising:
receiving a voice message on behalf of an intended recipient;
storing the received voice message;
determining a preferred one of one or more remote communication devices specified in a profile associated with the recipient as a function of a time period during which the voice message is received, said user profile specifying communication devices by which such recipient should receive delivery or notification of voice messages directed to the recipient, and updating the respective user profile accordingly;

sending an electronic message to the intended recipient, the electronic message including a hyperlink to the stored voice message, whereby the intended recipient can retrieve the stored voice message by selecting the hyperlink;

receiving information from the intended recipient specifying a device through which the intended recipient desires to receive the voice message;
contacting the device specified by the intended recipient; and
delivering the voice message to the intended recipient through the specified device.

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Claim 48 (original): The method of claim 47 further comprising automatically generating the voice message upon occurrence of a predefined event.

Claim 49 (canceled).

Claim 50 (original): A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 47.

Claim 51 – 54 (canceled).

Claim 55 (currently amended): A method comprising:

- receiving information from a first device associated with a user indicating the user's desire to record and send an audio message;
- contacting the user via a second device associated with the user;
- receiving the audio message from the user via the second device;
- determining whether an intended recipient of the received audio message has a presence on a widely distributed computer network at a particular time and, if so, contemporaneously sending a pop-up text message to the intended recipient, the pop-up text message notifying the intended recipient of the received audio message;
- learning over time which one of a plurality of remote communication devices specified in a profile associated with the intended recipient is preferred at which to notify the intended recipient of the received audio message based on information included in the profile a time period during which previous audio messages have been successfully received by the intended recipient at each of the plurality of remote communication devices; and
- updating the profile associated with the intended recipient accordingly.

Claim 56 (original): The method of claim 55 wherein the first device is of a first device type and the second device is of a second device type different than the first device type.

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Claim 57 (original): The method of claim 56 wherein the first device type is a computer device, and wherein the second device type is a telephone device.

Claim 58 (original): A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the method recited in claim 55.